

BRYDE'S WHALE *BALAENOPTERA EDENI* ANDERSON, 1878 STRANDED NEAR ROSDALE, QUEENSLAND IN 1931. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 42(1): 326. 1997:- Bryde's whale *B. edeni* was the last balaenopterid to be described and its osteological distinction from the sei whale *B. borealis* Lesson, 1828 was not resolved until the studies of Junge (1950) and Omura (1959).

The Queensland Museum Archives contain correspondence between Heber A. Longman, a former Director of the Museum, and Rosedale residents concerning the stranding of a large balaenopterid ~ 6km south of Agnes Water (24°10'S, 151°53'E) in 1931. Longman wrote to Constable E.M. Riley of Rosedale Police Station on 26 November 1931: 'I am greatly indebted to you and Mrs Riley for the information telephoned last week regarding the remains of a whole found near Rosedale. Mr D. Hoore kindly gave me this morning an excellent series of photographs, and it is quite evident that the remains represent a Hump-back Whale, which is technically known as *Megaptera nodosa* ... Although we have a specimen of this whale in the Museum, which was presented by Mr Thomas Welsby, I should very much like to obtain the complete set of bones if they could be secured without much expense'. Riley replied and discussed potential problems associated with possible retrieval — factors no less relevant 65 years later. He recommended that the assistance of Mr F.G. Collins of Rosedale Cattle Station be sought: '... The distance and position where the skeleton [later noted to be ~ 15m long] is situated render it a very difficult undertaking ... It would take about 20 men and 4 or 5 motor lorries to accomplish such a task on a weekend...'. Riley suggested a possible alternative to road transport viz. that a boat tow, on a very calm day, a log raft on which the bones were loaded to Agnes Water where motor vehicles had ready access to the water's edge. Longman wrote to Collins on 14 December who replied on 29 December making no reference to the water transport proposal: '... One of my men who knows the location well advises that it would be very difficult to convey these large bones from where they are buried in the sand to where it is possible to fit a conveyance to bring them to the nearest Railway Station, a distance not less than 40 miles. There is practically no road from where the whale remains are for about 4 miles and the road from there to Rosedale is mostly bad and rough. I am of the opinion that the expense of recovering these bones and conveying them to the nearest railway would be for too heavy to warrant the outlay...'. In Longman's hand-writing there is an annotation to the letter: 'Mr Collins visited the Museum on Dec. 31st'. As far as is known the matter rested there — as did the skeleton.

Eleven photographs were sent to Longman. Two are shown here (Fig. 1). It is likely, from the cleanness of the skull and mandible as well as the state of the soft tissues still attached to the post-cranial skeleton [in photographs not shown here], that the whale had been stranded for some months. Its identification by Longman as a large adult balaenopterid is clearly correct but his suggestion that it was a humpback whale is considered erroneous.

The nasal bones are well demonstrated in the photographs and their anterior margins are concave and inclined forwards on their outer aspects, features seen among balaenopterids in

B. edeni and the dark shoulder form of the minke whale *B. acutorostrata* only (Omura, 1959 & 1975). The large size of the skull and mandible of the Rosedale whale excludes *B. acutorostrata*. There are now two specimens of *B. edeni* in the Queensland Museum, J21713 and JM4386, collected from Tin Can Bay and the Great Sandy Strait in 1965 and 1983 respectively. Their diagnostic nasal bone characteristics have been confirmed by Paterson & Van Dyck (1988). The skull of the humpback whale donated by Welsby and referred to by Longman is registered J3343 in the cetacean collection. Its nasals (and those of three other humpback whale specimens more recently collected) are antero-medially peaked and do not resemble the configuration of those of the Rosedale whale or the two *B. edeni* specimens in the Queensland Museum. The anterior nasal margins of the Rosedale whale are well posterior to the posterior maxillary concavity. Junge (1950) considered this an important characteristic of *B. edeni* compared with *B. borealis* in which the anterior nasal margins are at a similar level to the maxillary concavity.

The preserved archival material illustrates perennial problems associated with the retrieval of large cetaceans and has enabled a retrospective identification of *B. edeni*.

Literature Cited

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FIG. 1. A, Dorsal view of skull of the Rosedale whale which was estimated to be ~15m in length. The pre-maxillaries are missing and the left maxillary is damaged. B, Skull and mandible.